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MINISTRY

DEMANDED BY

THE PRESENT CRISIS.

BY

GEORGE B. IDE,

Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Philadelphia.

"Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament."

Baptist Union Theol. Sem. Coll.

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To the MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA BAPTIST EDUCATION SOCIETY, this little book, prepared and published at their request, in the hope that it might render some humble service to the cause in which they are engaged, is respectfully inscribed,
by

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE writer of the following pages deems little apology necessary for presenting them to the public. He is, indeed, aware that both the Pulpit and the Press have furnished much on the same general subject, of a character far superior to any thing which his own humble offering contains. Yet, as the topic is confessedly one of surpassing importance, entering vitally into all the interests of religion, and, at the same time, one which is strangely disregarded and under-valued in practice, he could not but be desirous of adding his feeble contribution to the mass of argument and appeal that has been put forth in relation to it. And certain it is, that until the churches of our land shall be fully awakened to this momentous matter, no publication bearing upon it, which is correct in sentiment, and kind in spirit, can be considered inappropriate or unseasonable. The opinion of those better qualified to judge than himself has

led the writer to hope that his production might be of some use, particularly in the region where it is his province to labour. He makes no claim to novelty of view, or originality of conception ; but has merely endeavoured to exhibit, in a simple and earnest manner, the thoughts and reasonings by which his own mind has been long and deeply affected. If, by the blessing of God, his unpretending effort should serve, in any measure, to elevate the standard of the ministry, or lead a single preacher of the Gospel to cherish a higher sense of his solemn trust, he will feel that he has not toiled in vain.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 12, 1844.

THE MINISTRY DEMANDED BY THE PRESENT CRISIS.

THE proclamation of the Gospel by the lips of a living ministry, is God's leading appointment for the extension of his kingdom, and the recovery of a fallen world. When has religion prospered in its absence? On what shore has the message of salvation been effectually published without its agency? Where is the promise that the Holy Spirit will exert his renovating influence, separated from it? It is to the other means of grace what the sun is to the solar system—the centre around which they revolve, and to which they are all subordinate.

Such being the prominence assigned to

this instrumentality, it is obviously of the highest moment, that those who are called to wield its solemn functions, should be thoroughly qualified for their successful exercise. This is, at all times, a subject of vital concern to the welfare of the Church. Under any possible combination of circumstances, an effective ministry is identified with her dearest interests. But, in the progress of the cause of God, there are periods when it is specially demanded. Such a period existed at the first introduction of the Gospel. A new religion was then to be founded. The human mind was to be aroused from its sleep of ages. Ancient prejudices and venerated errors were to be eradicated. Vice, long enthroned and deified among the nations, was to be assailed in its high places. The giant systems of idolatry were to be overturned; and the worship of the blessed and only Potentate established on the ruins of

polytheism. To accomplish this, required a ministry of surpassing power. And such were the early preachers of Christianity. The Saviour himself selected the men—trained them with the utmost care—conferred on them miraculous gifts—and sent them forth to their arduous service, furnished with every qualification that could fit them for vigorous and efficient action. And thus endowed, how rapid and triumphant was their course from city to city, and from province to province! With what matchless energy did the Word of Life fall from their lips! How mightily and successfully did they attack the entrenchments of sin, and the strong-holds of darkness! Before their resistless onset the gods of the heathen fell; the gloom of superstition vanished; the oracle and the shrine were abandoned; and the vast empire of paganism crumbled into dust. The bigoted Jew, the haughty Roman, the culti-

vated Greek, the rude Barbarian, trembled at their appeals, and bowed beneath the power of the doctrines which they published. Their voice,—reaching alike the lonely desert and the crowded walks of men,—the craftsman at his toil,—the philosopher in his study,—the peasant in his hut,—the king on his throne—“electrified the nations, and changed the spirit and customs of the age.” Within the lapse of a single generation, they carried the victorious banner of the Cross over every region of the civilized world.

A similar emergency arose when Christianity, long entombed in the deep grave of papal corruption, was again to emerge from the festering mass, pure, elastic, unimpaired. For centuries, the Church had been almost extinct. Profligacy pervaded the priesthood; ignorance and fear enchained the laity. A gigantic spiritual despotism, supported by the civil arm, stretched its

iron sceptre over an entire continent, and held the minds and consciences of men spell-bound in its fetters. Every movement for freedom was watched with sleepless jealousy by its million eyes; and dungeons and flames awaited all who dared to oppose its domination. What, then, must have been the vigour of character, the moral courage, the intellectual strength, that could enable Luther and his immortal associates to grasp the pillars of this overshadowing hierarchy, and heave it from its deep foundations!

A crisis, different indeed in its circumstances, but requiring equal ability in the constituted guardians of the church, exists in our own day. The aspects of the present time demonstrate that we live in a most important period of the world—a period which will send down its influence to coming ages, and shape, for good or for evil, the destinies of unborn generations.

And, surely, no christian can contemplate these aspects without a firm conviction, *that the interests of Zion, at such a juncture, demand a powerful ministry.*

This is the topic to which attention is now invited; and in considering it, we shall endeavor to show.

I. THE QUALITIES NECESSARY TO CONSTITUTE A POWERFUL MINISTRY.

II. THE EXIGENCES REQUIRING SUCH A MINISTRY: and

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH IT MAY BE SECURED.

Before we enlarge on the first of these points, it may be proper to guard against misapprehension by observing, that when we speak of *power* as an attribute of the christian ministry, we refer only to its *instrumental* power. All *real* power to sustain and carry forward the triumphs of the Cross resides in God alone. Without the presence and co-operation of his Spirit,

no ministry, however skilful and vigorous, can have any influence in subduing the depravity of the human heart, and changing its enmity into love. Yet it is no less true, that God ordinarily employs for this purpose such an instrumentality as has in itself an adaptedness to accomplish the end in view. And the more perfect its adaptedness, the greater will be its efficiency. It is to this *suitableness* for the work—this *fitness to produce effect*—that we allude when we speak of ministerial power.

With this preliminary remark, we proceed to consider some of the essential elements of power in the christian ministry.

1. Of these, the fundamental and unquestionably the most important one, is *genuine and decided piety*. For the want of this nothing can atone. The authority of scripture, the nature of the office, and the magnitude of its objects, all demand

it. This is the animating principle, without which all other endowments, however splendid, are but a gilded effigy, empty, soulless, and cold. In its absence there may be learning, talent, eloquence; but how vain and impotent, how void of life and unction, will all these be, unless they are sanctified by grace, and baptized in holiness! What! can he, who has no religion, or whose religious attainments are low and meagre, successfully inculcate the great truths and duties of religion upon others? Can he, whose sense of sin is faint, impress upon others a conviction of its enormity? Can he, who is not himself penitent, teach others contrition? Can he, whose own life is unholy, display to others the beauty of righteousness? Can he, whose own heart is not fired with love to God, kindle up the sacred flame in the bosoms of his fellow men? Or can he, whose views of the preciousness of the

Saviour, and of the efficacy of his blood, are dim and feeble, guide other men to his atoning sacrifice? No; although such an individual had "all knowledge, and understood all mysteries," and could speak in strains more sublime and glowing than ever fell from an angel's tongue,—yet, wanting this vital ingredient, all his imposing gifts and performances become "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," and after the highest finish and adornment, resemble only the lifelike but lifeless beauty of a corpse, "laid out in state, and decorated with the silent pomp of death." The minister, who would prosper in his work, must be a man of deep and thorough godliness. It is no ordinary type of piety that will ensure this result. It is not enough that he be merely a christian. It is not enough that he occupy the common level within the precincts of holy ground. He must ascend the eminences of Zion. He must

have the "fruits of the Spirit" in strong, vivid, and prominent exercise. He must possess a conscience acutely sensitive to the touch of evil, and keenly alive to the honour of God. He must breathe the very atmosphere of prayer, live continually under the influence of a heavenly temper, and maintain an unbroken communion with the skies. He must have a strength and clearness of spiritual vision that shall bring down the things of eternity to the near view and intimate fellowship of his own mind; a depth and fervour of love to Christ and the souls of men, that shall impel him to ceaseless activity in his solemn vocation; and a mighty and invincible faith, which, fixing its unblenching eye on the throne of the Eternal, and laying its firm hand on his immutable promises, can trample on all the vanities of time, and smile at difficulties, perils, and death. In a word, religion must become the all-per-

vading element of his being. It must be so high, and deep, and absorbing, as to engross the whole man. It must imbue all his feelings, direct and actuate all his faculties, extend to all his habits of thought and modes of conduct, live and burn within him as the great impulse of his soul, and shine out conspicuously in all his character, influence, and labours. Nor is it an irregular and extravagant, though earnest, piety which we advocate; but a piety based on sound and broad views of evangelical truth, deriving its nutriment and its growth from the glorious doctrines of the Gospel, and gathering its warmest inspiration beneath a Saviour's cross; a piety ardent yet solid, buoyant yet stable, zealous yet intelligent, excited yet collected; distinguished, not for the undue prominence of particular graces, but for the full and harmonious development of all; seeking scriptural ends by scriptural

means ; and drawing alike its motives and its aims from the commanding sanctions of the Divine will, the benevolence of Christ, and the wants and miseries of a ruined world. Such is the piety which is indispensably requisite to produce a high degree of power in the christian ministry. Such was the piety of the apostles and martyrs and confessors of the primitive church ; and what vast results they achieved we have already seen. Such, too, in later times, has been the piety of Leighton and Baxter, of Pearce and Fuller, of Edwards and Whitfield, of Baldwin and Payson—men who stamped their impress, strong and wide, on the age in which they lived ; who shone as resplendent luminaries in the moral firmament, and left a blaze of light on the sky, when they sunk, full-orbed, to their rest. And such also, in our own day, must be the piety of every minister who would eminently serve God, and benefit his race.

2. Another source of power in the christian ministry arises from *the anointing call of the Holy Spirit*. It is a great and pernicious error to imagine, as many have done, that our Lord has vested in the church, or in any class of its officers, the authority to appoint and perpetuate the preachers of his Gospel. From this unwarranted assumption has sprung the vain and chimerical dogma of an "Apostolical Succession," and of a priestly order possessing and retaining in its own hands peculiar and exclusive functions, and transmitting them from one to another in an unbroken line of descent;—a dogma savouring far more of the Jewish than of the Christian dispensation, and tending directly to encourage formalism, and to substitute human mediators in place of the Divine. In opposition to this groundless theory, the Scriptures plainly teach us, that the Redeemer has reserved to himself the pre-

rogative of selecting and designating the heralds of his salvation. Those to whom he now assigns this sacred work, he sets apart to it by the same sovereign choice which he exercised in the case of his apostles and their associates. This choice he makes known to them, by the impressions of his Spirit on their minds, convincing them that such is their duty, and urging them to its performance; and by the indications of his providence, opening and preparing the way before them. At the same time, he generally imparts to his people a corresponding persuasion of the fact, and leads them to second and carry out his own election. "The Holy Ghost said," to the disciples assembled at Antioch, "separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto *I* have called them." All that the church, or any body of her functionaries can lawfully do, is simply to commission and ordain those whom Christ, by the

voice of his Spirit, has already chosen. She cannot, by her own will or pleasure, make to herself “pastors and teachers;” but is to receive them as a direct and precious gift from her exalted Head. Accordingly, she is required—not to create labourers—but to “pray the Lord of the harvest” to raise up such as he approves, and “send them forth into his harvest.”

All whom He thus introduces into the field of holy toil, are the true and legitimate successors of the Apostles,—the rightful ministers of the everlasting Gospel, empowered, by the seal of Divine appointment, to proclaim its doctrines, and dispense its ordinances; while those, who have received no such credentials from Heaven, are but presumptuous intruders into the sacred office, and destitute of every claim to exercise its hallowed trust, —though consecrated by all the prelatical hands that ever swayed a crozier, or held usurped authority over the heritage of God.

Now, we argue, that this special call from on high to the work of the ministry, is absolutely essential to the efficient discharge of its arduous responsibilities. No one, whatever may be his attainments or advantages, can expect to succeed in the great design of winning souls to Christ, but by the immediate blessing of God. His servants may "plant and water;" but He alone "giveth the increase." Hence, the apostle Paul, speaking of himself and his coadjutors in the promulgation of the Gospel, says, "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us *able* ministers of the New Testament." In this declaration, he recognizes, not merely the fact that the real ambassadors of Christ are such as Jehovah expressly summons and appoints to this service, but, moreover, that their fitness and ability adequately to perform it, are derived from the assisting grace with which he accompanies the summons. Indeed, the Holy Spirit, the

great author of ministerial success, is promised to attend the labours of those only who publish the message of redemption, in obedience to the celestial command, "Go, speak to the people all the words of this life." It is to his own divinely called and commissioned heralds, that our Saviour has given the animating assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The men, therefore, whom He selects as his messengers, may anticipate from him support and aid denied to those who "run without being sent." Humbly confiding in his gracious word, living by faith upon him, and looking for every supply to his infinite fulness, they shall receive communications suited to all their necessities. In Him, their darkness shall become light, their ignorance wisdom, their weakness strength; and the weapons of spiritual warfare, wielded by their feeble hands, shall be rendered "mighty, through

God, to the pulling down of strong-holds.” And when this truth shall be more generally acknowledged and felt by the entire body of Christians, insomuch that none shall offer to become preachers without the fullest conviction of their own minds that such is the will of God, and the churches shall approve and send forth none who give not the clearest evidence of being called from above, what a vast increase of efficiency will characterize the watchmen of Zion.

3. A third element of power in the Christian teacher, *is a high degree of intellectual culture.* The futility of unsanctified learning and talent to accomplish the momentous aims of the Gospel ministry, we readily and fully admit. Yet no one, who has properly reflected on the subject, can doubt that, when associated with personal holiness, and the manifest call of the Spirit, they become important

auxiliaries to ministerial success. The truth of the aphorism, that "knowledge is power," is daily exemplified in society. Other things being equal, the man who knows most will, in secular affairs, exert the greatest amount of influence upon his fellow-men. And the same holds true in religion. The ambassador of Christ, therefore, in order to be eminently useful, should be thoroughly educated. By this, however, we do not mean that he must, in all cases, go through a prescribed and extensive round of liberal studies; for there are numerous fields of labour in which such acquisitions, though always highly desirable, are not imperatively required. Besides, many who were deprived of the advantages of early training, have, by subsequent industry, application, and practical experience, in a good measure supplied the deficiency, and become most valuable and successful preachers of the faith of

Jesus. Still, it admits not of question, that, wherever it is possible, he, who is to be the guide of souls on their march to eternity, should receive the most solid and complete preparation which our best collegiate and theological institutions can furnish. His mental faculties, originally vigorous, should be developed, strengthened, and expanded by a course of systematic and protracted discipline. As far as his opportunities allow, he should be familiar with the various departments of literature and science. He should dwell over the classic pages of antiquity, and commune with the spirits of the mighty dead, until he feels all their power and greatness growing upon his own intellect. He should be well versed in the laws of the human mind ; instructed in all the details of pastoral duty ; and skilled in the most effectual methods of impressing the conscience and the heart. He should, moreover, be accurately ac-

quainted with the annals of Christianity ; with the rise, character, and progress of sects ; with the ever-varied developments of error ; with the alternate depressions and triumphs of truth ; and be able to take up the history of the church at the point where the Sacred Record leaves it, and trace its course, through persecution and repose, through disaster and prosperity, through ages of darkness and eras of light, down to the present day. But, above all, he must be deeply taught in the Book of God. Here lies the great field of his researches. In the Bible is contained the message which he is to deliver. From its divine armory he is to draw the weapons of his warfare. From its exhaustless stores of wisdom and knowledge he is to obtain his official furniture and equipment. It is, therefore, indispensable to his efficiency, that he be well instructed in the volume of Revelation. That wondrous volume is

endlessly fertile and suggestive of ideas; full of the seeds of great principles and of holy efforts; and concealing, in many an unregarded passage, precious gems of truth, which a more careful analysis may yet discover. Hence he must be able to read it, with ease and accuracy, in its inspired Originals; to interpret it correctly and clearly; and to unfold, not only its general import, but its most minute and latent shades of meaning. He must understand its doctrines in their appropriate combinations and arrangements; in their diversified relations and consequences; and in all their applications to the claims of God, and to the duties and the welfare of men. Thus must he be furnished to every good word and work. Thus, by long and patient study of these lively Oracles, must his mind become a rich depository of the thoughts which the Holy Ghost teacheth—thoughts massive, sublime, fervid, and

pregnant with celestial energy. Without this intimate acquaintance with the Sacred writings, however gifted he may be, however learned in other respects, nay, however pious, he will be comparatively powerless and unprofitable; he will be but little owned and blessed of God; and his ministrations, vapid, pointless, unedifying, will evince, by their deplorable want of scriptural sentiment and unction, that, whatever else he may be, he is not an "able minister of the New Testament."

4. The last element of power in the Christian minister, which we shall notice, *is a prompt facility in the employment of his resources.* By this, we mean that peculiar tact and adaptation, that nice and delicate skill in the science of address, which is so necessary to influence and control the ever-changing moods of men. The importance of such an endowment is manifest from the fact, that there

are many preachers, distinguished neither for talent nor erudition, who yet, by a singular readiness in suiting means to ends, and a prodigal fertility in expedients, are able to wield a wide sway over the popular mind, and to accomplish great and extensive good. It is, therefore, of vast moment to the minister of Christ, that he should possess the faculty of bringing out and applying to the actual occasions of his calling the treasures which he has acquired, and of communicating forcibly and impressively to others, what he himself knows and feels. In the absence of this qualification, he may be devotedly religious; he may, besides, have received the highest intellectual cultivation, and have travelled the whole circle of classic and theological lore; but still he will be weak and inefficient. He must have more than these, if he would move and mould the mass of immortal beings around him. "He must show

qualities of business, energy, performance—or *impression*, the point of all his aims, is lost.” He must learn the secret of making himself felt, and of stamping his influence, deep and broad, on the characters of those with whom he comes in contact. *P* Now, in this particular, the ministers of religion are oftentimes remarkably deficient. There are numbers, in every section of the land, who have come forth, with rich literary attainments, from the university and the seminary, and who are adepts in the theory of their profession, but yet, when brought into the field of real service, prove utterly wanting in practical dexterity, and are mere nullities in the Church, because of this defect. They are pious and learned; they possess noble gifts, both natural and acquired; and in the seclusion of the study they can prepare very excellent and weighty sermons; but they can no more produce them with effect before an audi-

ence, than the fabled Vulcan could wield the thunderbolts he had forged. In the distance and chilling reserve with which their spirits are wrapt up, they are as widely separated from the regards and sympathies of the busy, breathing, living world, as the hermit in his remote cell, or the lone astronomer on his mountain-height. They are not working and every-day men; they have not the power of bringing their thoughts and feelings to bear upon others; and the consequence is, that their labours, both in the pulpit, and the more private walks of pastoral life, are unacceptable, uninteresting and feeble. One plain, unlettered preacher, with his warm heart and glowing utterance, his practical habits, and his intuitive perception of human passions and prejudices, will achieve more for the advancement of Zion, than an army of these slow, torpid bookworms, with the starch of the college yet stiff upon them,

with their heads of knowledge and souls of ice, their frigid manners, and their sluggish delivery that lulls like an opiate. It is not by such men that the world is to be roused and shaken. It is not by such men that the crowds of impenitent sinners are to be disturbed in their fatal repose; or the slumbering host of God's elect awakened to glorious deeds, and led on from victory to victory, until the earth alone shall be the limit of its conquests. No: to do this requires men of action, promptitude, zeal. They must, indeed, be intelligent and well trained. But they must also be men who can execute and perform—men who desire to do good, and know *how* to do it—men conversant with the structure and operations of the human mind, familiar with the aspects and habitudes of society, commanding in manner, and versatile in methods of address—men whose weight is *felt*, whose moral power fastens itself

with hooks of steel upon all whom they approach—men strong and earnest in their feelings and purposes, whose thoughts are fire, and whose words are flame, and who deal, not in cold abstractions, but in truths and arguments which burn into the conscience and melt the heart. Such are the men, and such only, who can be expected to exert a transforming influence upon surrounding multitudes.

We have thus enumerated what we regard as the principal ingredients of an effective ministry—*devoted piety, a divine call to the work, cultivated intellect, and a ready skill in the application of truth.* The man in whom these are united, will be “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,” “mighty in word and deed,” and “commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”—Let us now consider,

II. SOME OF THE EXIGENCES OF THE

PRESENT DAY THAT DEMAND A POWERFUL MINISTRY.

1. *The first is the universal diffusion of intelligence.*

The time has been when the mass of the people were, to a great extent, uneducated; and at such a period even a feeble ministry might be useful. But the circumstances of society, in this respect, have undergone, within the last half century, a striking change. The increase of knowledge has been inconceivably rapid, and has carried the present generation to an intellectual eminence of which our fathers, in their fondest visions, never dreamed. It is not that marvellous specimens of genius and learning are found in greater proportional frequency than before; but the general mind, the community of mind, is more enlightened. The stream of knowledge, though not deeper, is wider than formerly, and sweeps along a broader ex-

panse. No longer confined to a favoured few, like the Nile in its overflow, it has burst the ancient embankments of privilege and prescription, and is spreading its fertilizing waters on all sides. In many parts of our land, it is rare to find an individual who is not well informed, and able to converse intelligently on all general subjects; and the day is not far distant, when, under the present extending system of public education, the same will be true of the entire nation. No one, indeed, can doubt that we live in a period of unprecedented intellectual activity. Who is not amazed at the profusion of the teeming press, and the winged speed with which its products are scattered over the whole surface of the country? Who does not marvel at the rapidity with which literary institutions of every class are springing into existence, as by the touch of magic? When have the walks of science been

trodden with greater zeal, or more animating success? In what age has the bar, the rostrum, or the senate exhibited more impassioned eloquence, or more mental power? Who has ever seen the human mind, in all its departments of effort and acquisition, waked up to keener endeavour, or putting forth a more intense energy?

Now, it is a truth which all will admit, that the ministers of religion, like every other profession, cannot be successful without the respect and confidence of the community. But to secure these, at the present day,* it is not enough that they be men of unquestioned rectitude, and thoroughly devoted to their sacred calling; they must also possess an elevated intellectual character. They must keep pace with the progress of society around them. If they remain stationary while all other classes are advancing, their relative position will necessarily be lost, their hold on public

esteem weakened, and their influence greatly impaired, if not wholly annihilated. And experience is rapidly showing, that any portion of the Christian Church which continues to be served by an uncultivated and feeble ministry, must inevitably, in the onward course of things, soon cease to command attention, and be left far behind in the career of efficiency and usefulness. For the present crisis, we need a ministry of such vigour and such resources, that it can grapple with the most astute and polished minds, and become, by its lofty standing and its masterly power, the object of veneration instead of scorn or pity. It should have the learning to illumine every circle ; a force of reasoning that can carry conviction to all understandings ; a felicity of illustration that can render plain the most difficult subjects ; and a varied and persuasive eloquence which shall move and thrill alike the rude and the refined, the

illiterate and the educated. It must be qualified so to exhibit religion as to commend it to thinking men; to give to its announcements of divine truth an eminently instructive character; to furnish aliment for thought as well as incentives to feeling; deducing and unfolding from the Scriptures the great doctrines and duties of the gospel; in their adaptation to the laws of mind, to the increasing lights of the age, and to the condition and wants of society; and establishing all by a strength and lucidness of argument which the most sceptical cannot resist, nor the most unreflecting fail to perceive.

2. Another feature of the present day, which demands a powerful ministry, *is its growing and all-absorbing spirit of worldliness.* We live at a period of great enterprise, and in a land affording almost unlimited scope for experiment. New sources of wealth, and fresh fields for

speculation, are continually opening. The facilities of business have also been vastly increased. Canals, crossing large states, have been constructed. Numerous railroads, traversing the country in various directions, have levelled or penetrated mountains, lifted up valleys, and arched wide rivers. Every branch of commerce and of industry has received an unwonted and extraordinary impulse. The result is, that riches have flowed in upon us like a flood, and have brought with them their usual attendant—a feverish and insatiate thirst for gain. The energies of almost our entire population are turned into the single channel of amassing property; and the current into which all seem bent upon rushing, is constantly growing deeper and broader, more rapid and resistless, and threatens to swallow up every other interest. The love of money has become the all-engrossing passion of the land; and

“Mammon, earthliest of the spirits that fell,” is the deity at whose shrine the warmest homage is paid, and the costliest incense presented.

The influence of such a state of things on the cause of religion is inexpressibly unhappy. The world rises up between God and the soul, and the glories of eternity are held in dim eclipse. Men are so immersed in secular pursuits, so hurried and excited in the career of worldly accumulation, and so elated by prosperity, that they can scarcely be made to listen, even for a moment, to the claims of the Gospel, or seriously to consider the relation which they bear to their Maker, and to the awful realities of the coming life. Nor are the professed friends of Christ exempt from the perils of this snare. By far the larger portion of them are infected with the same fatal madness ;—pressing eagerly after “the things which are seen and temporal,” grasp-

ing at dreams and illusions, dazzled by glittering dust, and so occupied in scrambling for it, as, in a great measure, to forget their nobler inheritance, the high purposes for which they were redeemed and sanctified, their obligations to the Saviour, and the claims and woes of undone humanity. And certain it is, that nothing so stains the glory of Zion, so palsies her strength, or so checks her triumphs, as the prevalent worldliness of her children.

To breast this rising tide—to turn back this swelling and destructive torrent—is the solemn mission of the angels of the Church; and to do so, requires their strongest and best directed efforts. No feeble appeals, no puny and common-place endeavours, will meet the vast and appalling emergency. If the public mind is borne impetuously forward in chase of earthly vanities, it should be met with corresponding vigour and earnestness on the part of the ministry,

in order that its regards may be arrested, and its thoughts fixed on the stupendous destinies of a future state. The fore-shadows of eternity must be cast over the attractions of time, that men may be warned off from their idols, and made to feel that higher objects demand their concern. The Church must be taught the fearful criminality of living to herself, wasting her energies in hoarding up treasure, and reposing on the lap of ease and luxury, while the sacred commands of her King are yet unobeyed, and from the four winds there comes into her ears the cry of myriads perishing in darkness and sin. And with equal plainness and cogency, must the unconverted be admonished of the dangers of that insane course, in which the fleeting possessions of earth are gained by the sacrifice of the soul. At such a season, the "prophets of the Lord" should be endued with great intellectual and moral

strength. They should be living examples of holiness, dwelling near the throne of God, and moving on to their duties as under the very beamings of its light. They are called to throw themselves, with all their powers of persuasion, entreaty and remonstrance, between the world and the immortal spirits for whose welfare they are appointed to watch, and to obstruct their headlong progress to ruin, by bringing out and urging upon them, in the most impressive manner, all the high and constraining motives which the gospel supplies.

3. *The peculiar excitability* of the times requires a very firm and powerful ministry. A busy and enterprising age, like our own, is naturally given to strong excitement. Impulse becomes the master influence. Men feel rather than think, and act rather than reason. They evince a morbid restlessness, an impatience of calm investiga-

tion, and of all tranquil movements. The public appetite craves stimulants, and demands, not only that they be administered in rapid succession, but that each should be more stirring and pungent than those which preceded it. Hence society exhibits a constant and ever-changing effervescence. As bubbles, on the surface of an agitated stream, rise and sparkle for a moment, and then disappear, to be followed by others ; so the topics, which yesterday awakened interest, grow insipid to-day, while those now in the ascendant are equally doomed to give place to the fresher and more absorbing ones of to-morrow. In literature, in politics, in morals, in religion, the latest novelty attracts the largest share of attention. There is nothing settled, stable, abiding. All is bustle, fluctuation, and feverish inquietude. The passions of the community, like untamed and fiery coursers, spurning the rein, and chafing at all control,

rush wildly forward in whatever direction any mad or reckless charioteer may urge them. No caution is exercised, no prudence tolerated. None pause to examine—none to consider. All are up and agog in pursuit of the object which for the time enkindles their zeal, without once stopping to inquire whether it be a substance or a shadow, a blessing or a bane, a shining form from above, or a baleful spectre from the abyss.

This excitable temper is not in itself an evil. Like steam, the mightiest physical agent which human invention has discovered, it is an engine of havoc and death when left to its own blind fury, but an instrument of glorious performance when rightly directed. Were it turned into proper channels, and employed for the attainment of noble ends, the energies which it calls forth would work out incalculable benefits. But scarcely ever is it either

wisely impelled, or skilfully governed. On the contrary, rash and heady adventurers avail themselves of it, to mount into a brief notoriety, and float awhile on the culminating wave, careless upon what rocks and quicksands they may drive the vessel whose management they have assumed. The ill regulated excitements which are often thus produced, resemble far more, in their effects, the destructive rush of the tornado, than the balmy breathings of health-laden gales. Like all consuming fires, they sweep over the land, leaving behind them in their path of desolation, only the smouldering ashes in which they have burned themselves out, and the blackened relics of former peace, verdure, and fruitfulness. In such a state of things, a feeble ministry, instead of controlling popular sentiment, and wielding it for salutary purposes, will succumb to its pressure, and be borne away by its violence ; while the ceaseless requisition made

upon them for new fuel to keep up the unnatural heat, and their inability to supply it, will force them into perpetual change from place to place, to the total loss of their influence, and the flagrant reproach of Zion.

Under these circumstances, so characteristic of the present day, how important is it that those who are set for the defence of the gospel, and who, from their position, are expected to mould and sway the public mind on all moral and religious subjects, should have the wisdom to perceive the true course in which it should be led, and the talent and skill to conduct it onward to beneficent results. We wish not, indeed, that the spirit of our times should be less ardent or impetuous. We would not, if we could, go back to the still and dreamy days, when men wasted their existence in stagnant repose, or profitless speculation, unmindful of the wants of their species, satisfied with things as they found them,

and lulled into slumber by the false but soothing maxim, that "whatever is, is right." We love action, earnestness,—the glow and bounding pulse of life—not the coldness and leaden silence of the sepulchre. And we know, that only as society is aroused and kept in motion, will it make any progress in the elevation of its principles, the improvement of its condition, or the carrying out of those great reforms and benevolent enterprises, to which the providence of God so evidently points. But we would have its burning enthusiasm placed under wholesome restraint, and taught to pour itself forth in well ordered efforts for solid and permanent good. We would have the ministers of religion, whose province it is to give shape and character to all moral movements, eminently qualified, by their knowledge, foresight, and spiritual discernment, to lead the waking intellect of the age to

lofty and godlike aims ; and to guide it from shadows to realities, from delusion to truth, from darkness to light, from earth to Heaven. Let them be thus endowed, and be faithful in using their advantages, and this tremendous power, which abandoned to itself is but an element of ruin, will become, in their hands, a most potent means for advancing the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind.

4. *The tendency to innovation*, so prevalent in our day, renders a thoroughly trained and influential ministry of vast importance. The eager and intractable spirit that is now abroad, disdaining all beaten paths, seeks for itself new systems of belief, and new modes of operation. Whatever is established, and covered with the sober hue of time, it regards as worthless, out of date, and ready to pass away. It is very possible, that from this assault upon long standing customs and opinions somewhat

of value may accrue. Old prejudices may thus be undermined, incorrect practices reformed, and unfounded dogmas exploded. We are not of those who imagine that every thing ancient is necessarily true and useful, and every thing modern false and pernicious. While we are firmly persuaded that all the essential doctrines both of ethics and religion as revealed in Scripture, together with all the grand instrumentalities for their diffusion prescribed by the same infallible authority, are already known and understood, we are far from supposing that no additional light may be thrown upon them, or that they may not yet be brought out with greater distinctness, and in more numerous and diversified applications. Certain we are, that no new truths remain to be discovered; but we believe that truths common and familiar may be shown under new aspects, as inculcating new duties, and as bearing directly against errors and

abuses around which years and precedents have cast their imposing halo. We have no blind reverence for antiquity itself; it is only the true and the right in antiquity which we venerate.

But in the fierce and indiscriminate onset which is now made upon the settled order of things, there is imminent danger that, along with what is corrupt, all that is pure and sound will also be destroyed. Every thing that has been sanctioned by the consent and usage of the past is subjected to special hostility. And this hostility is violent and wide spread. It manifests itself under many shapes, and in multitudinous connections. Through its influence, the most glaring absurdities, if only they be novel, find disciples and advocates. New codes of penal justice are put forth, teaching that crime is misfortune rather than guilt, and that robbers, pirates, and murderers are objects of sympathy and commiser

ation, instead of punishment. New systems of intellectual philosophy, assailing all the fundamental opinions respecting the human mind which have been held for centuries, are promulged, and gain numerous adherents. In political economy, theories are advanced, which war against the fixed arrangements of nature, and contravene the first principles of the social state. While in morals, doctrines so fearful and monstrous are broached, that we know not at which most to marvel, the wickedness or the fatuity of those who originated them. Some of these sagacious enlighteners of their generation have discovered, that all civil laws and governments are unnecessary and injurious, acting only as clogs on the free development of mind and character. Others have ascertained that the Church of the Redeemer, which he designed to be perpetual, and set up as the great conservator and purifier of the

world through all time, is worn out and decrepid with age, exhausted of its strength and virtue, and serving no purpose in society but to fetter its energies, and impede its progress to perfection. And others, yet more astute, have found out that the Bible is an antiquated book ; that the gospel of Christ is behind the age ; that the men of the present day know more of human duty and obligation than did the Son of God and his inspired apostles ; and that the glorious system of faith and practice, given by Jehovah, sealed by atoning blood, confirmed by miracles, and preserved by the constant intervention of almighty power, has now fulfilled its mission ; and though still venerable as a monument of former wisdom, is no longer suited to the condition of man, and, therefore, of no practical value !

Nor have even the sacred precincts of Zion been entirely free from the deranging

hand of innovation. We have new forms of theology, in which the old evangelical truths of total depravity, sovereign grace, and human dependence, are so modified and softened down as to render them more acceptable to the unregenerate heart. We have also new measures for increasing the number of converts to religion. The stated preaching of the gospel, daily prayer, holy living, and other means appointed by Christ, having been deemed insufficient,—an instrumentality has been invented expressly for the production of revivals; an instrumentality so potent in its effects that the work of a year may be done by it in a few days, and, at the same time, so complicated in its nature, that only the few who are initiated into its mysteries can successfully manage it. Hence, as a necessary consequence, we have a new class of ministers, whose business it is to roam through the country, usurping the prerogatives of pastors, and

showing the churches how little their regular instructors are fitted to edify and enlarge them.

Such are some of the startling errors and disorganizing extravagances which this rage for innovation engenders. At a season so perilous, it is surely of the utmost moment, that those who are appointed to guard and defend the truth, should possess great discrimination, stability and vigour ; that while they encourage every real improvement, and welcome all fresh light from the pages of inspiration, they may teach the people to “ask for the old paths,”—the paths marked out in Scripture, and proved safe by experience—“and to walk therein, that they may find rest to their souls.”

5. A further characteristic of the age, which calls loudly for a well trained and competent ministry, *is the increasing energy and boldness displayed by the enemies of our holy religion.* The adversaries

of Christianity have always been numerous, and relentlessly bitter ; and never have they slumbered in indolence, or, for a moment, rested on their arms. But at no stage of the conflict have they exhibited such malignity and determination of purpose, such intense and concentrated effort, such varied resources, or such confidence of success, as now. Look, for instance, at the rampant spirit of Infidelity which is careering over the length and breadth of the land. No longer restricted to a solitary few, who were content to pursue their unholy speculations far away from communion with the common mind, it has come forth from its hiding places, and is mingling with the throng of men in their daily walks, and in all their phases of opinion and forms of intercourse. It does not even seek to disguise its objects. Having thrown off the mask, and shaken hands with shame, it stalks in the broad blaze of noon, and unblushingly

proclaims its abominations in the front of day. Every where, like a withering mildew, or a pestilential malaria, its presence is seen and felt. It infects our politics; pervades our legislation; pollutes the fountains of public instruction; breathes its baleful poison into the genius of our literature; and, by the aid of the press, and the improved means of communication, is spreading the seeds of corruption, disorder, and profligacy, thick and wide, from the heart to the extremities of the nation. Its impure and demoralizing doctrines reach alike the learned and the ignorant, the merchant and the artisan, the parlour and the work-shop, the stately dwellings of the crowded city, and the lonely cottage amid the embosoming mountains. The very demon of blasphemy, fresh risen from the abyss, seems hovering over the whole face of society, darkening the bright sunshine of virtue and hope and joy, and dropping venom and death from every point of his raven wings.

In connection with this prevalence of scepticism, contemplate the daring designs and the rapid advances of Popery. That "the Man of sin" has selected this land as the soil in which to transplant his worn-out and exhausted power, no intelligent and candid observer of passing events can hesitate to admit. For this purpose, he is deluging the country with hordes of his besotted and ferocious votaries—the dregs and offal of Europe ; and sending with them apostles of darkness, to carry out his plans, and propagate, in this home of freedom, the dogmas of papal supremacy and infallibility. These foreign emissaries are peculiarly fitted to their work. With minds cultivated and polished to the last degree ; refined and winning in their manners ; shrewd, supple, versatile, intriguing ; prolific in devices, and gifted with unconquerable energy and perseverance,—they scruple at no means, and shrink from no labour, to accomplish their

ends; founding colleges and seminaries in order to control education, and gain ascendancy over our youth; assailing the Bible in our public schools; tampering with the ballot-box; and striving, by every wily stratagem, to subvert our civil and religious liberties, and establish, in their place, the spiritual domination of Rome. Nor is the system, which they thus seek to fasten upon us, an antagonist to be despised. Notwithstanding its puerile mummeries and absurd superstitions, it is much less an object of contempt, than of fear and abhorrence. Clothed in the hoary grandeur of antiquity, and gorgeous with the pomp of an imposing ritual, it dazzles the eye, and enthrals the senses. Though in essence always the same, it assimilates its Protean form to all states of intellectual progress, and all diversities of public sentiment; revels in licentiousness at home, and counterfeits purity here; props the despotisms of the old

world, and shouts for democracy in the new ; prates of toleration where it has no power to persecute, and dooms protestants to the dungeon and the stake in its own domains. Fired with the lust of universal dominion, it is constantly scheming to recover its lost provinces, and to augment its empire by the addition of fresh territories. Ever true to its character and its projects, it gains a lodgment, at first, with slow and stealthy tread, and by hypocritical professions of charity and benevolence ; but when once it has been fondled into power, it lays aside its lamb-like aspect, and stands forth a monster of destruction, trampling down thrones and sceptres, crushing whole nations under its iron feet, proscribing all freedom of conscience, and rioting in the blood of God's murdered saints.

But it is not alone from the quarters now mentioned, that the cause of the Redeemer is to expect an onset unexampled in fierce-

ness and violence. Closely leagued with these external foes, there is an enemy in the bosom of Protestantism itself, from which scarcely less danger is to be apprehended. We refer not here to the thousand minor errors and ephemeral extravagances, by which different portions of the church are agitated and defaced ; for these are evanescent in their nature, and will soon pass away. A deeper and more vital defection excites our alarm. In all the commotions of visible Christianity, the chief opposing elements have ever been, the Religion of the Spirit, and the Religion of Forms. The latter of these is now struggling for the mastery with a zeal and vigour never before manifested. Sleepless and insidious, it is resorting to every means to diffuse, through all ranks and classes of the community, the leaven of its doctrines, and to corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by human admixtures and perversions ; repre-

senting its privileges as hereditary ; vitiating and misapplying its ordinances ; substituting shadows for its essence ; reducing it from its purely spiritual character, into a thing of mere outward show and observance ; and making salvation to depend, not on repentance toward God, and faith in the justifying righteousness of Christ, but on the peculiar ordination of priests, and the mystical efficacy of sacraments.

When, therefore, we consider the formidable array of all these hostile forces—the wealth, learning, and worldly influence by which they are supported—the malice and might of the powers of darkness by whom they are incited and led on—and reflect, in addition, upon the strong tendency of the human heart to error, and its inveterate opposition to “the truth as it is in Jesus”—how irresistible becomes the conclusion, that those, who are to marshal and direct the armies of the living God in such a combat,

must be men of vast mental resources, as well as personal holiness ; profoundly versed in all the branches of religious and secular knowledge ; and able, from their commanding talents, their logical acumen, and their skill in the use of their ethereal weapons, to confute the sophistries of the infidel, expose the idolatry of the Romanist, confound the devotees of formalism, and show to an unbelieving world, the beauty and the glory of the pure gospel of Christ.

6. *The aggressive attitude* of the church at the present day requires a ministry of great energy and power. Whatever may have been the paramount duties of the people of God in past ages, it is certain, both from the teachings of Scripture and the movements of Providence, that their chief vocation—their especial sphere of labour—at the period in which we live, is to invade and conquer the kingdom of sin. And that such is their grand and inspiring mission,

they are, in some degree, becoming sensible. Zion is awaking from her long and guilty indifference to the great command of her ascended Lord, recalling the spirit of her best and earliest days, putting on her celestial armour, and girding herself for the moral subjugation of the world. Already has she begun the work. Already has she reconnoitered the numbers and positions of the enemy; surveyed the broad realms to be reclaimed; explored the desolations of Christendom; and penetrated the gloomiest recesses of pagan darkness. Already is she supplying the destitute in her midst with spiritual bread; translating the word of Life into the languages of uncounted millions; sending the heralds of redeeming love to heathen shores; and gathering, from their degraded population, numerous converts to the Prince of Peace. And having received her impulse from God, she will be carried forward by his grace from region to

region, and from triumph to triumph, until every adversary shall be overcome, and all nations shall acknowledge the sway of our enthroned Immanuel.

Now, what eminent piety, wisdom, and intellectual strength are requisite in the appointed leaders of the church, to guide her energies and conduct her achievements in such a crisis as this! How imperatively does the emergency thus presented call for extraordinary qualifications in the standard-bearers of the "sacramental host!" When armies are to attack and subdue hostile countries, they need far abler generals, than when stationed in garrisons, or inactively reposing in the heart of their own land. In like manner, the legions of the Cross, in their holy endeavour to bring back this revolted earth to its rightful Sovereign, require commanders of consummate experience, courage, and fidelity. In the prosecution of this mighty undertaking,

great plans of action, fraught with stupendous results, are to be formed and directed, and vast enterprises of benevolence, influencing the destinies of all coming time, to be originated and superintended. Important changes are to be effected in those social institutions which contravene the statutes of the gospel. Human governments are to be moulded into conformity to the laws of Heaven, and the authority of the Saviour. War and oppression are to cease. Literature, jurisprudence, business, are all to be purified, and consecrated to the service of God. The whole church is to be roused, marshalled, and led on, with concentrated force, and united ranks, to the great battle of Jehovah. The Scriptures are to be faithfully rendered into all the dialects of the peopled earth. Every species of heresy, superstition, and heathenism is to be uprooted. New fabrics of society are to be constructed on the ruins of corrupt

and exploded systems; and Christianity, living and unadulterated, is to be crowned empress of the world. For these transcendent operations a ministry of unrivalled ability is needed; men wise in counsel, firm in purpose, energetic in conduct—men of clear, comprehensive, and far-sighted views, of burning enthusiasm, and inflexible integrity—men who shall be champions for truth and holiness—moral Alexanders—of whom “one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight”—men such as prophecy evidently points out, when, foretelling the glory of the latter day, it declares, “He that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord.”

7. A ministry of surpassing strength is demanded by *the prospect of great civil and religious commotions*. That such are approaching, is clearly manifest from inspired prediction. The visions of the

future' which the Bible unfolds, lead us to anticipate scenes of conflict and revolution, such as our race has never experienced. As the gospel advances to its final ascendancy, its struggle with the myriad forms of error, the power of Antichrist, and the dark forces of idolatry, will become more close and earnest, and the collision more wide and fearful. Kingdoms will be moved, hierarchies cast down, and thrones demolished. The very foundations of the social structure will be convulsed and shaken, and every institution based on mere worldly principles swept away, to give place for others harmonizing with Heaven. The church will be kindled to her primitive zeal, and putting forth her collected might, will boldly claim for her Sovereign the spiritual empire of the earth. And every such movement may be expected to excite the resistance and rage of her implacable adversary and his legions.

“Satan will come down in great wrath knowing that his time is short.”

. The light of history also, as well as the fore-showings of Scripture, teaches us to look for a period of intense and unwonted excitement. When have momentous changes been brought about in the general opinions of men, or in the long established abuses of society, without the upheavings of violence? How often, during the progress of those changes, have the hearts of the righteous failed them for fear, in view of the things which were coming on the earth!

A single glance at the present aspect of the world will reveal abundant causes of strife and disturbance. They are seen in the very organization and frame-work of civil politics; in the flagrant injustice, and the monstrous wrongs which are everywhere tolerated and fostered; in the antagonism of discordant systems of religion;

and in the alarming spread of crime, insubordination, and lawlessness. Before the dawning of that glorious day, when the reign of Truth, Righteousness, and Love, shall be perfect and universal; when all mankind, united by the golden bond of the gospel, shall become one family, and over the vast sisterhood of nations dove-like peace shall wave her sunny wings;—moral and political revolutions of a most agitating character must inevitably occur.

A storm, then, such as the world has never yet witnessed, is assuredly gathering. Already, indeed, are the elements in motion. We perceive the rising cloud. We hear the distant thunder. We feel the rumblings of the incipient earthquake. We see, here and there, the breaking out of the imprisoned fires. Nothing but the removal of God's restraining finger is wanted, to plunge this nation at once into all the horrors of domestic anarchy. And without any miracu-

lous interposition of Providence, the causes now constantly at work, might, in a few short years, involve states and empires, and the universal Church, in one wide scene of convulsion and dismay.

At a period so solemnly critical, with what urgency do the interests of Zion call for a ministry of unprecedented knowledge, spirituality, and power! She needs men familiar with every department of truth and duty, deeply taught in all wisdom and goodness, of far-reaching ken, unbending principles, and invincible decision;—men who can stand unmoved and fearless amid the whirl of excitement, and the shock of conflict; who can view, with a serene eye, the heaving earth and the raging tempest, and keep their steady hand upon the ark of God, though “the sea roar, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

Having thus noticed the importance of an efficient ministry to the circumstances of the age, we are now prepared to inquire,

III. BY WHAT MEANS SUCH A MINISTRY MAY BE ATTAINED.

1. *Candidates for the sacred office, and those who are already in it, must propose to themselves a much higher standard of ministerial excellence.* It is to be feared, that many, who are looking forward to the work of preaching the Gospel, entertain but a feeble sense of its tremendous responsibility, and its amazing consequences. Hence they are content to enter upon it without suitable preparation—without the requisite stores of knowledge—without the development and balance of powers which proper training imparts—without symmetry of character, and that mature discipline of mind and heart which is the product only of time, effort, and prayer.* It is also to be apprehended, that numbers, now labouring in the field, are equally deficient in their convictions of the magnitude of their calling; and, therefore, are satisfied to drive

on, from year to year, with no serious endeavour to improve their qualifications, and thus, by increasing their influence, to augment their means of doing good.

As a remedy for this evil, let both these classes meditate more deeply on what it is to be an ambassador from God. Let them consider the awful accountability of the man to whom such a trust is assigned, and the momentous relations which he sustains to the glory of the Saviour, the purity and honour of his Gospel, the prosperity of his Church, and the immortal welfare of men. Let them contemplate the priceless value of the soul, the ineffable bliss of its salvation, and the dreadful results of its loss. Let them reflect that the final ruin of one soul is a calamity more to be deplored, than the burning of a planet, or the extinction of a sun; that the recovery of such souls has been deemed an object worthy of the solicitude of angels, and the infinite sacrifice of

Christ ; and that Jehovah has ordained, through the ministry of reconciliation, to restore an outcast world to his throne, and prepare it for the felicity of his presence. Let them thus think and feel, and they cannot rest without employing every means to secure those acquirements, which will fit them for a vocation so grand in its aims, and so stupendous in its issues. Aware that the necessary mental furniture is not the miraculous boon of Heaven, but the fruit of long and close application, they will regard no cost of time and labour as too great to be expended in its attainment. They will resolve to reach an elevated position ; to transcend the measure of ordinary men ; to excel in knowledge, holiness, and usefulness ; and to become giants in the church, like Aaron, whose very name signified "*a mountain of strength.*"

The noble achievements which such a purpose, sacredly formed and pursued,

would tend to bring forth, may be inferred from the history of some of the most shining lights that have ever arisen to bless our race. When Andrew Fuller entered the ministry, he was without education, except such as he had gleaned from the humble schools of his native village. Who that had then seen him—a raw and diffident youth, of rustic manners, and uncouth appearance—could have dreamed that in his rugged form there slumbered the germ of that mighty mind, which, in its after unfoldings, was not only to rouse the English Baptists to the work of evangelizing the East, and to direct the machinery of so vast an enterprise; but also, by numerous productions of matchless worth, to illumine his own times, and send down a flood of radiance to coming ages? The impulse which, under God, raised him to the eminence on which he subsequently stood, was his holy determination to improve every talent and

opportunity, that he might magnify his office. Inspired by this motive, he made the day in which he lived illustrious, and left his name, a treasure and a glory, to the latest generations. The celebrated Dr. Carey was in early life a simple mechanic, destitute of culture, rude in speech, and with an intellect apparently slow and heavy. But his aim was a lofty one; and by striving, with an industry that never tired, and a resolution that never wavered, to honour Christ and benefit mankind, he surmounted every difficulty,—became the master spirit of modern missions—rose to the highest rank among oriental scholars—and poured the beams of revelation over nearly half the globe. In like manner, the beloved and venerated Thomas Baldwin gained his distinction under the most embarrassing circumstances. Reared among the rocky hills of New Hampshire, his only instructors were its rushing streams, its lonely lakes,

and its wild scenery. At the time of his settlement in the polished metropolis of New England, he was but imperfectly acquainted even with his vernacular tongue. And yet, so energetic and unwearied were his efforts, that he soon acquired an amount of knowledge seldom surpassed; attained the leading place in the denomination to which he belonged; and did more than any other man to give to the churches of that section their present standing and character, and to originate and sustain those grand schemes of benevolence in which they are now so extensively engaged. His influence still lives in all the surrounding region, and every vale and mountain is fragrant with his memory.

These examples show how much a determined will may accomplish, when animated to ceaseless toil by the love of God, and a desire for the salvation of men. They deserve the most strenuous imitation from

all the ministers of Christ, whether their past advantages have been limited or ample. Those who have enjoyed but few opportunities for intellectual improvement, and who now find the regular means of instruction beyond their reach, need not be discouraged, nor sink down under the paralyzing impression that they are necessarily confined to a low and narrow sphere. The prize of high attainments and of wide usefulness is within their grasp. And although the attempt to secure it may be painful and arduous, yet, if they are firmly resolved and sedulously diligent, their final success is certain. Let them embrace every occasion for cultivating their gifts, increasing their knowledge, and promoting their piety; let them study, with careful attention, the best works on doctrinal and practical theology, and drink, deeply and constantly, from the living wells of inspiration—and they cannot fail to grow largely in mental stature, in

heavenly affection, and in ability to serve the cause of the Redeemer. Many of the mightiest champions of the church have been self-taught men. And surely, in view of the wonders which they have performed, no one, however defective his early preparation, who, like them, will devote himself to earnest and persevering labour, has reason to despond. Nor should those whose previous training has been of the fullest kind, give any heed, on that account, to the seducing voice of indolence. A common delusion to which such are exposed, is the false idea, that, in passing through a course of liberal studies, they have arrived at the goal beyond which no further advancement is to be expected; and that the acquisitions thus made are sufficient for all the demands of their important stewardship. Let them banish this idle dream. The discipline they have received is only a foundation for the edifice of future character; and it behoves

them to toil, with undiminished ardour, to rear that edifice, broad, high, complete in all its parts, and harmonious in all its proportions. They should strive ever to make fresh additions to their stores of thought, their scriptural intelligence, their personal religion, and their capacity to instruct and influence the souls committed to their charge. In short, it is the duty of every messenger of God, be he unlettered or educated, and of every student for the ministry, to fix his eye on the most exalted excellence of which he is capable, and to put forth all his faculties in the endeavour to reach it. Were this hallowed ambition more generally cherished, instead of here and there one exceeding the dimensions of a puny mediocrity, and manifesting unusual power, we should soon see multitudes on every side blazing forth with dazzling lustre, irradiating the whole moral heavens, and chasing the darkness from this benighted world.

2. *The churches must insist on greatly increased qualifications in those whom they set apart as religious teachers.* It cannot be doubted, that the chief cause of the feebleness and inefficiency of our ministry rests with the churches themselves. Many of them have not sufficient information and experience to decide upon the fitness of an individual for such a responsible service; and others are too indifferent respecting it to exercise the proper care and prudence. A low estimate of the greatness of the ministerial work, and of the endowments requisite for it, extensively prevails. Hence the door into this most important office is made so easy, that nearly all who desire it, can readily gain admission. It is mournfully true, that in the mass of our churches, men who have no claim to be the instructors of others in any thing, and least of all in the vast concerns of religion, by exhibiting a little gift at exhortation, and some flow of words, can, without difficulty,

procure a license to preach ; and when once this has been obtained, they can always find a presbytery lax enough, or careless enough to ordain them. The latter step completes the mischief. They are now, as they imagine, Christian ministers, regularly inducted into all the privileges and dignities of that heaven-appointed calling. They have realized the extent of their aim, and the consummation of their wishes. All incentives to exertion and improvement are thus taken away ; and they are just prepared to become mere supernumeraries in the consecrated host ; to cumber Zion with their dead weight ; or to migrate from church to church, as their paltry resources are exhausted ; dishonouring the gospel by their lame and vapid exhibition of it ; spreading sterility by their supineness, or creating divisions by their extravagances ; depressing the illiterate portion of their congregations to a still lower level, and disgusting

the intelligent by their emptiness and ignorance.

As this deplorable state of things arises mainly from the inadequate views of the ministerial character which are entertained among us, and from an abuse of the licensing system consequent upon such views,—its correction must of course be sought in the removal of these causes. The members of our churches ought, therefore, to cherish a far more elevated impression both as to the magnitude and the arduousness of the duties which devolve on the Christian teacher. They should learn, from the solemn statements of the Bible, the high importance attached to the station of him who is intrusted with the care of souls. They should feel, that not only their own edification, but the spiritual welfare of their children, of the community around them, and of the human race, is instrumentally connected with the qualifications of those who are commis-

sioned to minister in holy things. Under this conviction, they should use great caution in authorizing any individual to preach the gospel. We do not, indeed, ask them to forego this right, or to surrender it to any ecclesiastical judicatory. We believe it to be agreeable to the mind of Christ, that they alone should judge of the call and the suitableness of those who desire to become heralds of the cross. But we would have them exercise this prerogative with the utmost circumspection, with earnest prayer for divine guidance, and with a settled determination to give no encouragement to the unworthy or the incompetent. In cases where they have not sufficient light to enable them to form a correct decision, they should seek counsel from others more experienced,—not as a relinquishment of their independence,—but as a safe-guard against the grievous mistakes which have so often been committed. And in all circumstances

they should lay it down as an inviolable rule, to impart their sanction to none but such as are already 'scribes well instructed,' or such as by their native powers and habits of application, afford assurance of soon attaining to that character. Were they thus to be true to their own interest, and rigorously to require in their ministers, not only piety and christian consistency, but adequate gifts and thorough preparation, the calamities which they now suffer might speedily be removed. And to do so, is their imperative duty. It is time this wide and disastrous evil were checked. The providence of God—the progress of society—the aspects of the age—the wants of a perishing world—all demand it. In licensing and ordaining candidates, and in the selection of pastors, the churches must now see to it, that those on whom they fix the seal of their approval, possess, along with personal godliness, good natural abilities,

and an evident call to the work, that high mental discipline, and that intimate acquaintance with evangelical truth, which will enable them to edify the body of Christ, and present the doctrines of the Gospel, in a clear and convincing manner, to the understandings and consciences of impenitent men. Nor need it be feared, that by such a course the number of ministers will be diminished, and the destitution of the churches increased. When cultivated and effective preachers are earnestly desired and sought, they will soon be found. In spiritual things, as well as in temporal, demand elicits supply. It is the gracious arrangement of God, to bestow on his people the blessings of which they feel their urgent need, and to obtain which they employ the appropriate means. Besides, even numbers, without the requisite qualifications, have little value. They are, in fact, an injury rather than a benefit, by lowering the sacred

office in the public estimation, propagating error, ignorance, and fanaticism, and occupying, idly or perniciously, the ground which, were they out of the way, other and better men might fill. The real influence and usefulness of the ministry depend far more on its character than on its numerical array. A multitude is not always a host. The myriads of Persia, though countless as "the sands that line the ebbing shore," were altogether inferior in power to the small but compact and disciplined ranks of Greece. And in the gospel warfare, a few thoroughly trained and furnished will accomplish more for the overthrow of sin, the elevation of the Church, and the illumination of the world, than thousands in the absence of these advantages.

3. *The churches must feel, far more intensely than they have yet done, the importance of assisting to educate their rising ministry.* The strong natural pow-

ers, fervent piety, and inward unction of the Spirit, which are the essential pre-requisites for the sacred office, are not conferred on those alone whose affluence supplies them with all the facilities of literary culture. More commonly, they are bestowed on young men of obscure condition—the robust children of poverty and labour. As the choicest marble often lies lowest in the quarry; as the costliest gems are imbedded in the most rugged rocks, and the richest mines most deeply hidden in the dark bosom of the earth; so talents of the highest order are frequently to be found in the midst of indigence and seclusion. The brightest ornaments of the church have, in numerous instances, been men who were taken from the humbler walks of life; and whose minds received their bold and vigorous cast, not from the soft hand of wealth and ease, but from the stern grasp of penury, and the iron pressure of toil. And,

doubtless, there is now, among our valleys and mountains, or in the forgotten retreats of our great cities, many a youth of brilliant promise, in whose heart Christ has kindled a burning desire to proclaim the unsearchable riches of his grace, and who needs but the plastic touch of education, to send him forth, a Judson or a Boardman, to enlighten and bless millions of his fellow-men. God has, among his people, immense stores of mind—unexplored treasures of sanctified intellect, which require only to be developed and cultivated, to form an array of mental and moral power, that shall move the world. The larger proportion of these richly endowed spirits are without the means of educating themselves, and unless encouraged and aided by others, must either remain in their secular occupations, or enter the sphere of holy exertion, under all the embarrassments of deficient knowledge, and undisciplined faculties. It is

equally the obligation and the interest of the churches to seek out such gifted minds in their retirement and obscurity, and place them upon a course of ample and elevated instruction—to take these diamonds in the rough, and shape and polish them, until their latent lustre is elicited, and they blaze forth, in a constellation of splendor, on the brow of Zion. No other department of benevolence has such commanding claims as this, or is so urgently called for by the exigences of the times, and the coming conflicts and triumphs of Christianity. It was the military schools of France, where youths of the finest martial abilities, from all parts of the empire, were gathered and trained, that produced those mighty warriors, who afterwards led her victorious troops over all the plains of Europe, and gave immortal memory to many a bloody field. In like manner, it is to her seminaries of the prophets that the Church must

look for the men who, under God, are to sway her counsels, devise and execute her plans, arrange and concentrate her forces, and conduct them on, conquering and to conquer, to her ultimate and universal dominion. And to aid the noble design of providing a ministry adequate to her wants, literary and theological institutions, of the highest character, and furnished with every facility for the most complete and effective education, have been founded all over the land. Let the churches, then, avail themselves of these advantages, and liberally sustain in such institutions every devoted and talented young man whom God may raise up and call to his service—and soon will their ministers be pillars of strength, and their angels “flames of fire,” pouring a flood of light, and heat, and blessed influence, upon all around them.

4. Finally, *let Zion rouse herself to more earnest and believing prayer in*

behalf of her present and her future ministry. If she is to possess such instructors and leaders as are suited to her pressing necessities, they must be bestowed by her ascended and glorified Lord. None are competent to her great and tremendous occasions, but such as He appoints and qualifies. His promise is, "I will give you pastors after mine own heart." It is the prerogative of the crowned Mediator to "give evangelists, and prophets, and teachers." Yet he will exercise this right of his sovereignty in answer to the supplications, and in proportion to the faith, of his people. It is true of this, as of every other blessing, that He "will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

The singular and melancholy fact, however, forces itself upon our attention, that the majority of christians manifest less solicitude, and offer up fewer petitions in reference to this subject, than almost any other

connected with the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. In the public services of the sanctuary, in seasons of social devotion, and at the family altar, we are often refreshed and elevated in soul, by listening to very full and importunate supplications for the conversion of sinners, the establishment of believers in holiness, and the progress of the gospel throughout all lands. But seldom do we hear any thing more than a casual allusion to the all-essential boon of a suitable ministry, and frequently are we pained by its total omission. What a sad anomaly is this ! How amazing is it, that in view of the broad fields ripe for the sickle, with their fruit returning to the earth for the want of reapers, and in open violation of the express and authoritative command of the Saviour, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into his harvest," the people of God should still slumber on in guilty

indifference to a matter of such transcendent moment ! How strange as well as deplorable, that while the salvation of the impenitent, the success of truth, the peace, purity, and advancement of the churches, the cause of missions, and the various enterprises for ameliorating the condition of our species at home and abroad, are constantly remembered at the throne of grace, the very instrumentality which forms the basis of all efforts for their promotion—giving life, energy, and execution to them all,—should be only incidentally noticed, or wholly forgotten ! Where shall we find a solution for this mystery ? Is Zion satisfied with the number and the competency of the teachers who now train her children, shape her movements, and direct her destinies ? Does she deem them amply fitted, in all instances, for their important work ; or believe that no increase of their efficiency would ensue from beseeching the Holy

Spirit to shed down upon them a richer abundance of his precious gifts? Has she no confidence in the promises of her King? Has she lost sight of the glorious declaration, that He has ascended on high to communicate, from his infinite fulness, supplies suited to all her necessities? Does she not know that in the ranks of the irreligious are many men of vast learning and power, prostituting their talents to the service of evil, whom God, in answer to prayer, might renew, and make advocates of the faith they now seek to destroy? Has she no eye for the desolations which every where prevail,—no ear to heed the cry for sowers of the word, which comes up, in tones of touching lamentation, from all parts of the great moral waste,—from neglected portions of our own country,—and from waking millions shrouded in pagan gloom and hopelessness? Or feels she no concern for the character of those who are hereafter to marshal her

against a world in arms, and lead her on, through storms and battles, to universal empire?

From whatever source the deficiency of prayer in this particular may spring, it is most ruinous in its effects, and calls, with thrilling emphasis, for speedy reform. The Church, through all her borders, and in all her departments, should now awake to a just sense of the ministry she needs, and send up her fervid implorings into the ear of Jehovah for special grace to rest on his anointed servants. For such as are already engaged in the work, let her make ceaseless intercession, that the Divine influence may be poured out upon them in unwonted measure, spreading its illuminations through all their faculties, opening to their view the deep treasures of the gospel, strengthening and expanding their intellects, glowing in their affections, breathing from their lips, and enduing their ministrations with irre-

sistible efficacy. And let her bear on her heart before God those who are preparing ere long to stand upon her towers, and seek for them, in addition to high mental culture, the sealing of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of wisdom and power from above. Under every conjuncture of events, and amid all the pregnant indications which thicken around her, prayer for the ministry is among her most pressing obligations. Do the winged winds bring to her, from every quarter, the loud demand for helpers in destitute regions, and for missionaries of apostolical spirit to go forth into heathen climes, and, with the lever of the gospel, lift from the groaning nations the weight of misery and sin? Let her lay the moving appeal at once on the bosom of Almighty love. Do irreligion, impiety, and profligacy, like torrents broken from their barriers, roll in upon us with overwhelming violence, and threaten to sweep away the foundations

of order, and all feeling of accountability to Heaven? Does the tide of worldliness rise and swell, and seem about to engulf in its raging vortex all that is benevolent, and spiritual, and holy? Is infidelity strewing the land with its books and tracts of blasphemy, steeped in poison, and written within and without, with pollution, licentiousness, and blood? Does Romanism, though palsied at the head, and dying at the heart, make fresh contortions in the extremities of its serpent form, and labour to strangle both freedom and Christianity within its giant folds? Do the sacred hosts of the Redeemer suffer defeat and reproach from intestine dissensions, and from external enemies? Let them not despond, nor tremble at the fierce and thronged array of their foes. Let them rather rise up to the combat, girded with the omnipotence of faith—such faith as in ancient times “subdued kingdoms, obtained promises,” and bore onward the

uplifted standard of the cross against the combined opposition of earth and hell. And do the omens of the times, as well as the unfoldings of prophecy, betoken the approach of great changes and overturnings in the political and moral condition of mankind, requiring a ministry of pre-eminent strength, and of seraphic zeal kindled from on high? Then let there be unparalleled reliance on the grace and faithfulness of God. The coming crisis of the world, with all its stupendous movements and results, lies open to his omniscient eye. And He is infinitely wise to choose, and all-powerful to prepare and summon forth the agencies which his cause demands. Let Zion thus cleave to her Lord, obey his commands, confide in his word, implicitly follow his direction, and look for help and succour alone to his invincible arm,—and He will, by methods of his own, raise up, for her deliverance and enlarge-

ment, men of ample abilities, of primitive faith, and of heavenly ardour,—who, under Him, shall guide her through every struggle, and peril, and conflict, until victory shall sit, sun-like, on her banners, the diadem of the globe encircle her brow, and all nations repose, in joy and holiness, beneath her peaceful sceptre.

O happy day ! O glorious consummation ! May God hasten its arrival. May he cut short the lingering years, and introduce the blissful period when the heralds of his mercy, taught by his own Spirit, energized by his own power, animated by his own benevolence, shall publish on every shore, and to every child of our lost humanity, the message of Redemption. Then, on the long night of gloom and bondage, shall dawn the Jubilee of the creation. Then shall this once polluted and sin-burdened planet, as it rolls round in the hands of its Maker, send up to him, from all its regenerated inhabi-

tants, the glad incense of praise, and the pure offering of love. And then, loud and joyous as the hymn of angels over the new-born world, shall be heard the anthem of that world recovered, ‘Now is come salvation, and the kingdom of our God;’ while Heaven, catching the rapturous strain, shall respond to earth, ‘Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.’



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